

A Muslim's Response to

A Christian's Response to

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TAWHID: BELIEF IN ONE GOD

(An Apologetic Paper by Joseph Smith)

by Abu Iman 'Abd ar-Rahman Robert Squires

PART 1

RS: *Dear Mr. Walker,*

RS: *Thanks for the reply! I am glad to see that my writings have generated some response! I apologize for the delay in responding, but I recently relocated to a new house and it is Ramadan as well. Things tend to slow down a bit in the month of Ramadan, especially here in Kuwait. Both my recent move and various Ramadan activities have conspired to keep me from spending more time on Internet related matters - for better or for worse. Additionally, I've been spending some of my time lately responding to other e-mails, as well as trying to complete the rest of my responses to the Joseph Smith writings. As you may have noticed, I haven't added much to my Home Page lately. Due to the very limited time I have to work on these articles, I can't really afford to spend much time writing a "response to a response to my response", etc. Not that I feel that it's not worthwhile, but once I get caught in the vicious circle of responding to everything that people send to me, my productivity drops. I sometimes look forward to the day when all of my responses are completed and all I have to do is answer e-mail! (But I seriously doubt that day will ever come!) However, since I noticed that you've already posted your response to me in the soc.religion.islam News Group, I felt that a fairly detailed response on my part would be in order. I apologize to all of the interested readers for the excessive length of this response. It is unfortunate that I didn't have time to post my entire reply to Smith's "Tawhid" paper all at once, because some of the issues which you bring up are answered in forth-coming sections of it. Rightly or wrongly, I decided to post each section of it as they were completed. I've got quite a number of other responses about 75% to 90% written, but getting them finished just takes a lot of time! By the way, since a number of people have*

complained that the kuwait.net link is rather slow, I'm going to eliminate all (or most) of the graphics on my "Islamic Awareness" Home Page in order to speed things up a bit - God willing. However, all of the material regarding the so-called Muslim/Christian debate will also be posted, God willing, on the Domini server as well. Additionally, the University of Essex Islamic Society has also been posting these articles. So without further delay, here are my comments on your reply . . .

>Dear Mr Squires (do you prefer a different address, if so pls let me know what to use in future)

RS: *Either 'AbdurRahman or Robert is fine.*

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>I have been accessing some of the material written by J Smith and yourself through the Domini web site (plus some of your correspondence with J Katz), and did not want to remain only a spectator.

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>I have a lot of contact with Muslims, both in my home town and in the Middle East and Africa through my work, and have often had discussions about God with them. However, although I have been able to identify points we have in common, I felt unable to discuss other than superficially, as I was aware that I knew very little about Islam, and equally, that my friends knew very little about my Christian faith. I accordingly never took these discussions very far, as I did not want misconceptions on either side to lead to problems and possible conflict.

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>I learned about the web pages after attending a debate in our home town between Joseph Smith and an English Muslim (a convert from Roman Catholicism) on the authenticity of the Qu'ran. I am very grateful both to you and Messrs Smith & Katz for the time taken to make material available which has enabled me to deepen my understanding. I have printed out your response to Mr Smith's paper on Tawhid, and am working my way through it with great interest.

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>However, I believe that in your response you are labouring under some misapprehensions about Mr Smith's document and about Christianity generally, and while I am very new to the discussion of Islam in detail, I

RS: *Well I was an active Christian for quite a number of years (until I was twenty-eight years old), so I think my "misapprehensions" are hopefully fewer than you may think. However, the burden of proof in this regard is on me, I guess, since just because someone practices a religion for many years doesn't necessarily mean that they understand*

it properly. As far as "misapprehensions" about Smith's writings, I have (so far) tried to address him (more-or-less) line-by-line. I can't judge his intentions, or what caused him to write what he did, I simply respond to what he wrote. In the "spirit of dialogue", I think that is what we need to try to stick to - the objective facts of what people write. Unfortunately, I think that you have some "misapprehensions" about what I've written in my response to Joseph Smith, but I'll address them as they come up.

> would like to put these to you for your comment as I work through the document, rather than wait until I have finished all of it. As you wrote, it is rather long, and so will be easier to deal with (and remember my questions/comments for it) in sections, rather than all together.

RS: *Yes, and unfortunately I still don't have all of it posted.*

>BTW, I am also working through Sahih Bukhari, so if any of my questions or comments are answered there or in your correspondence posted elsewhere, please forgive me - I am trying to correct my ignorance!

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>1) No condescension

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>I am sorry that you find Mr Smith's attempts to make the Christian response understandable to Muslims condescending. Having met him, I do not believe they are intended in this spirit at all, nor did I read them in that way.

RS: *Well, as I've already said, I certainly can't know people's intentions. However, in my response to his "Tawhid" paper, I simply stated the way that he, and many others, come across.*

> As stated above, I have been trying to read Sahih Bukhari, and other documents written upon them and the Qu'ran by Muslims, and find I have to be very careful, as many terms which are taken as read by Muslims mean either nothing, or else something completely different, to me, because of the differences in our background and teachings. I would therefore be grateful, rather than indignant, if a Muslim were to write an explanation of the Muslim faith in a way that my simple Christian mind can understand!

RS: *I agree, but only IF he did it in the spirit of truth and mutual understanding. However, based on Smith's writings, that certainly*

doesn't seem to be the case. He just seems to be out there trying to sow doubts in people's minds using some pretty weak claims and misrepresentations in many cases. However, this might not be so easy to see if one doesn't have a detailed knowledge of Islam. But regardless of this, even if Mr. Smith is convinced that he loves all Muslims, we certainly don't see it that way. From the standpoint of the Muslim believer, he is a clear disbeliever who is calling people to the worst of sins. I sincerely hope and pray that Almighty God guides him, but I cannot condone his wrongdoing just for the sake of dialogue - regardless of how he may perceive what he's doing. Even if I were to receive 10,000 e-mail messages telling me that Joseph Smith is a great guy, that's really immaterial to the discussion at hand - which is the writings of Joseph Smith, not his intentions or personality.

> I really believe that if the discussions/debate are to be fruitful, we must work very hard to make sure that we don't take offence where none is intended.

RS: *As I said, you can't judge intentions, so you have to go with what people say. I should also add that I'm certainly not unique among Muslims in being offended by the tone, not just content, of Christian missionary writings on Islam.*

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>2) Hate Literature?

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>I am equally sorry that you feel that arrogance and hate permeate almost all Christian books about Islam.

RS: *Let me clarify my statement, since I believe that I said " . . . almost all Christian books about Islam which are intended for Christian readers", i.e. the ones that you pick up in the local Christian book store which "explain" Islam to Christians. The phrase "intended for Christian readers" being the key phrase that you seemed to have missed. As J. Katz says on many of his postings: "Learning about Christianity from a non-Christian is like getting kissed over the phone". The same holds true when learning about Islam. Why the double-standard? However, I certainly admit that there are books written about Islam by Christians that are not arrogant and which are informative as well. The particular type of book that I had in mind was the specific type of missionary book meant for Christian readers.*

>I cannot speak for others apart from myself and my immediate Christian brothers who have an interest in Islam and Muslims, but speaking personally I have a great affection for those Muslims I know.

While I obviously believe that Christianity is the way to find and worship God, I believe the vast majority of Muslims are genuinely seeking God (please don't misunderstand, I would also not claim that all who claim to be Christians are genuinely so), and therefore feel a great identification with them. Christians have for a long time felt too unsure of their ground in answering the claims of Islam to say anything at all about the issue (or at least directly to it), so there may be a certain triumphalism coming through in those books you have read, simply at now being able to make a response.

RS: *I don't know where you come up with ". . . Christians have for a long time felt too unsure of their ground in answering the claims of Islam ". Christians have been attacking Islam since the very beginning - both polemically and militarily. Who has been feeding you these myths? From (St.) John of Damascus to William Muir and from "La Chanson de Roland" to "Dante's Inferno" many Christians have never hesitated to criticize Islam. Ever heard of the Crusades? You should read some of the lies and blasphemies that Spanish Christians formulated against Islam during the Middle Ages! They were far from being "unsure" of themselves! Suffice it to say that there's not a drop of historical evidence for your statement, but plenty of evidence to the contrary.*

>Even this is undesirable, but I honestly doubt whether any of it could genuinely be called "hate literature".

RS: *Well I certainly don't expect you to take my word for it, but the "stuff" that they sell on Islam in many Evangelical Christian book stores (and even in shopping malls) could (almost) be termed "hate literature". It's certainly not "hate literature" in the true and classic sense, but many of the books seem dead set on breeding ignorance and hostility, not informed understanding. Take a look at "The Facts on Islam" by John Ankerberg or "The Islamic Invasion" by Robert Morey, which are a couple of disgusting collections of distortions and misrepresentations. If these books were written about Judaism and published in America, many people would probably call them "hate literature" - since that is what they'd be breeding. Unfortunately, it's hard to find anything much in Evangelical book stores criticizing Judaism, but they certainly attack the "cult" of Roman Catholicism, the Mormons, etc.*

> Maybe the Muslims have got so used to not receiving any kind of reasoned criticism of their beliefs, that they take great exception to it now, however it is phrased? However, I have not read many such books, so I freely admit that I do not speak from first hand knowledge.

RS: *It certainly seems that you don't speak from first hand knowledge, as opposed to the historical facts which I've presented above. Muslims have been hearing these arguments from Orientalists and missionaries for years - many years. Actually, I feel that it's Christians in the West that haven't heard the message of Islam or responses to the anti-Islamic propaganda that they are saturated with in the media. That's why many Muslims like myself have such high hopes for the spread of Islam in Europe and America in the future. There are already many indications that the false-propaganda and mis-representations are already beginning to backfire. If Islam was nothing but a jumble of inauthentic and mixed up teachings, then why have so many people had to misrepresent it for so long? Personally, as far as the Christian approach to Islam is concerned, I don't think things have changed very much at all in the past hundred or so years. Just because it seems new to you doesn't mean that it is. You have to look into the history of this debate/polemic/dialogue in order to know what has happened - which is much better than assuming or guessing.*

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>3) Incorrect statements in Mr Smith's paper

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>I do not know why Mr Smith states in his paper that the Shahada must be spoken before entering Mecca, if this is not correct, nor do I know his source for that statement or why he gives two different "greatest attractions" for converting to Islam in two different documents. However, I have his e-mail address and will ask him. All I can say for now is that he doesn't claim to be infallible or totally without contradiction, and I would not like to think that, because I may (and do) make contradictory or incorrect statements occasionally about all sorts of things, EVERYTHING I say is automatically worthless! I do not think any one of us would claim to be perfectly correct and consistent in all that we say and do!

RS: *I don't know the reasons either, and it's all beside the point. I was simply showing that he contradicted himself. Don't expect me to tell you why. I simply pointed out what he said in his writings was contradictory. The point about the Shahada in Mecca is certainly a minor one, but I bring these things out simply to show how shallow Mr. Smith's knowledge seems to be. It might not have much impact on you, but to Muslims many of these things are almost laughable, and certainly lend themselves to discrediting someone who wants to discredit Islam. Additionally, I never said that EVERYTHING that Mr. Smith says about Islam is worthless. Actually, I find his "Tawhid" paper to be rather useful in pointing out the serious defects of Christianity and its approach to Islam. I hope that our readers agree!*

PART 2

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>4) The Trinity

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>As regards Ahad and Wahid, Joseph Smith may well have failed to fully explain the definition of the nature of God according to Tawhid. However, I believe that your response to his statement also demonstrates certain misconceptions about what Christianity states about God. I would define myself as a Christian who believes in the Trinity, but reading your statement about God being indivisible did not perturb me in the least.

RS: *This is a typical Christian answer in this type of dialogue, because I know that's what they teach Christians to say to Muslims in dialogues. Not that I'm implying that you've been taught to say what you've said, but many Christians make such statements without REALLY looking at the evidence. Let me put it to you this way: in making such a statement (i.e. that you believe God to be indivisible), regardless of how you may personally feel, you contradict portions of the traditional Christian creeds. I have read widely on Christianity, both as an active Christian and as a Muslim. In saying "Tri-" you are mentioning divisions and the Christian creeds clearly mention them as well ("God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not made", three "hypostases" with distinctions made between them, etc.). These words aren't my opinion - these are objective facts. In the official doctrine of the Trinity, the "Three" in God is made as absolute as the "One". However, when talking to Muslims, Christians try to "water-down" the "Three". The problem with this dialogue is that you ASSUME that I misunderstand the definition of the Trinity, but miss the simple fact that you explain it in a way that contradicts traditional Christianity's explanation of the Trinity! Which brings us to another problem . . . all too often Christians use "explanations" for the Trinity that are both non-Biblical and heretical - especially when dealing with Jews and Muslims. I won't accuse you of that at this point, but in forthcoming sections of my response to Smith's "Tawhid" paper I do plan to touch on such accusations. For you to claim that God is "indivisible", but at the same time adhere to the classical Christian creeds is simply "double-talk". You're adhering to two mutually opposing concepts at the same time. If you study the development of Christian doctrines, or even the commentaries on the doctrines themselves, you'll come across this type of contradictory double-speak. For example, in many places in the Bible, Jesus ("the Son") and the Holy Spirit are clearly shown to be subordinate to "the Father". Additionally, Jesus too is shown to lack several of the necessary attributes of God (All-Knowing, Transcendent, etc.). Jesus spoke of "his Father" in heaven as "his God" (John 20:17), to whom he attributed superior authority, greatness and knowledge (Matthew 10:40 and 20:23; Mark 13:32, Luke 22:42 and John 5:36 and 14:28).*

Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2), but God is never tempted (James 1:13). Christian theologians, upon recognizing this, claim that in spite of all of this, they still "affirm" that Jesus is God, that He is the same "substance" as "the Father" and that Jesus has all of the "necessary qualities of Deity". What is this except double-talk? They can "affirm" and "confirm" it from now until the Last Day, but that doesn't change the fact that Jesus - even according to the Bible - doesn't have these necessary qualities. The Bible shows that Jesus lacks the necessary qualities of Deity, but "in spite" of this Christians affirm that he does! This is nothing but sheer foolishness and misguidance - not to speak of contradicting God! According to Christians, the members of the Trinity are "one" in substance but different in qualities. What else is this but polytheism in a monotheistic framework? Many Hindus claim belief in "One God", since they see the other "gods" as simply manifestations of the One Supreme God. In their critique of the Trinity, they argue that three "manifestations" aren't enough to demonstrate the infinite qualities of God. In the official Christian doctrines, the so-called "Son" has qualities that the Holy Spirit doesn't have, and the Holy Spirit has some that the "Father" doesn't have, etc. Even if Christian theologians intended to "protect the mystery of God" by formulating the Trinity, as they sometimes claim, that doesn't make it right. God intentions don't make anything right. So much of what Christians say are just empty words that are not Semitic in origin. Where does the Bible say that "mystery" and "paradox" are vehicles for arriving at religious truth? That's a Greek, not a Biblical idea. I'm well aware of the fact that Christians "claim" belief in "One God", but from an Islamic point of view, their claim is worthless - just like the claim of the Hindus. You can come up with all of the non-Biblical responses about how and why God had to give up His attributes and become a man, but they basically amount to man-made theories. It seems as though Almighty God, since He's not the author of confusion, could have explained all of this better if it was so important to mankind. Isn't He capable of doing that? Also, if He is capable of becoming man, He could have done so without divesting Himself of His necessary attributes. Christians sometimes try to prove that Jesus is God by the miracles that he did, which is very weak indeed. They try to use this to show that he had some of God's power - so He must be God (conveniently forgetting the fact that other prophets did miracles by God's power - and that didn't make them God). However, this contradicts their argument that God had to divest Himself of power in order to become man. If Jesus had some of God's power, then why not all of it - or at least more of it? He certainly should have known enough to know when the Day of Judgment was coming (Matthew 24:36) or whether or not the fig tree had fruit (Matthew 21:19, Mark 11:13) - both of which the New Testament denies.

> The word "Trinity" is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, but is a term defined later by Christians, in order to try to express the reality of

God as revealed in the Bible, just as I presume Muslim teachers have later invented phrases to pull together or categorize elements of Qur'anic teaching (as you state, if I have understood correctly, in some your correspondence with J Katz available on his web site).

RS: *Well, you are very incorrect in your presumption! And this is a very important point, and one where the superiority of the CLEAR guidance of Islam can be contrasted to Christianity very well. I have a forth-coming article (God willing), which is entitled "Language used in the Description of God" which addresses this issue in more detail. Now certainly, some types of information, such as hadiths or other elements of Islamic teachings, have been categorized, but this has always been done based on a clear or implied Qur'anic or Prophetic commandment. However, when it comes to language used to "describe" or "define" Almighty God, suffice it to say they Muslim scholars (not counting the heretics) have not "invented" or "innovated" anything in regards to Islamic teachings about Almighty God. I mention "not counting the heretics", because this is one of the major ways that one becomes a heretic in Islam - inventing things about Almighty God. Suffice it to say that no Muslim scholar worthy of the name has ever attempted to "define" God - and may God save us all from such blasphemy. Muslims base their beliefs about Almighty God, and any matter of the unseen, purely on Divine Revelation. According to the teachings of Islam, Almighty God is not just the BEST describer of Himself, but the ONLY describer of Himself. As a Muslim, I describe God just as He has described Himself in the Qur'an, and His Messenger described Him (based on revelation) in the Sunnah - without corruption, modification, intellectualization, qualification, or representation. True Muslims affirm for God what He has affirmed for Himself, and deny about Him what He has denied about Himself. In that they follow the statements of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and avoid what contradicts or opposes the sayings of the Muhammad, peace be upon him. Muhammad described Almighty God with the attributes of perfection and declared Him transcendent over all deficiencies contrary to perfection. In the Qur'an, God established the attributes of perfection in Himself in a detailed manner while forbidding any representation. In this way, both God and His Messenger brought a detailed affirmation with a general denial. If someone does "invent" things to describe God, then they are completely wrong in doing so. Below, you say that "The nature of God is obviously a very hard, even impossible, thing to grasp. Indeed, I would be very surprised if God COULD be properly understood by my limited mind." So why do use your MIND as a TOOL in order to try to understand or define Him? We have no business doing that! That's what Divine Revelation is for. Muslims believe in Almighty God as He revealed Himself, but they don't "define" Him in any way, nor do they use terminology for Him that he didn't use for Himself.*

>The first example of the revelation of God's unique oneness yet diversity (this may not be a good phrase - I am very open to better definitions) comes very early in the Bible, in Genesis chapter 2:

RS: *You affirm "indivisible" but affirm "diversity". Sorry, I can't give you a better definition, because I don't go around "defining" God based on my human mind - which you've basically already admitted you're willing to do. Anyone who reads Church history, or even Christian explanations of the Trinity, can see this is what Christians have done with the Trinity. It reeks of a definition of God. We Muslims would never do such a thing - we ONLY say about Him what He said about Himself - without corruption, intellectualization, qualification, or representation. Additionally, why aren't you satisfied with the terminology that traditional Christianity has used, such as "person", and "hypostasis"? Christians debated the details of these doctrines, as well as their terminology, rather heavily - as anyone who has studied them knows - so by modifying their language just a little bit, you risk falling into heresy. I think that part of the problem is that you assume that I interpret the "diversity" or "aspects" of God in a crude way which you don't intend - which leads us back to the problem of basing things on "assumptions", whether they be about God or our fellow man. Actually, the majority of your response seems to be based on assumptions about what I believe instead of addressing the issues that I brought up in my response to Mr. Smith.*

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>"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' >So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (my emphasis added).

RS: *Now concerning God's "image", you've only presented one side of the story. Like most verses from the Old Testament that Christians use in order to prop up their beliefs, there are others that contradict the way they understand it (or twist it). Additionally, they always give the verses an interpretation that NO ONE of a purely Jewish or Semitic background EVER gave to them prior to the coming of Greek-influenced Trinitarian Christians. Anyone who has studied this issue should be able to see that it was the influence of Greek thought, and putting Semitic texts in the hands of formerly pagan peoples, that allowed for the new interpretations. Remember, the Jews were an "iconoclastic" people, i.e. they forbade the making of images of any living thing - as the Ten Commandments clearly command. So one must keep in mind that when God speaks of His "image", it is nothing like created things, as the Old Testament clearly says. (See Exodus*

20:4-6, Leviticus 26:1 and Deuteronomy 4:16, 23, 25, 5:8 and Nehemiah 9:6.) From the Biblical point of view at least, one can confirm that God has an "image", but that image is nothing like anything "in the heavens above or in the earth beneath" - i.e. nothing that the human mind can imagine. Jesus, on the other hand, was, according to Christian belief, "100% God and 100% man" - and a "man" is something that has a image of created things. Additionally, the Bible clearly says that "no one can see God and live". (See Exodus 33:20, John 1:18 and I John 4:12) Many people saw Jesus and lived! All of these points exclude the possibility of Jesus being God. Capability has nothing to do with it. The possibility of the alleged "Incarnation" is eliminated by the Old Testament itself. It's really as simple as that. For these reasons, and several others, it is not only NOT wrong for a believer in Pure Monotheism to reject belief in such a so-called "concept of God", but it is positively commendable! Almighty God has strongly condemned idolatry and the worship of creation in both the Bible and the Qur'an. Due to this, no believer in Pure Islamic Monotheism should ever be moved into accepting or condoning any set of beliefs that even have a scent of contradicting these Divinely revealed commandments.

>If this does not show one aspect of God talking to the other aspects, to whom was he talking? The alternate use of the plural "us" and "our", and the singular "his", clearly indicate that God is both one and three (or at least more than one; the idea of three was clarified by Jesus, who spoke of Father, Son and Holy Spirit). I understand that Muslims claim that these ideas were added later by Paul, but the fact of the occurrence in the Old Testament, which is also the Jewish scripture, shows that this is not the case.

RS: Even though Matthew 28:19 groups the "Father, Son and the Holy Spirit" together in one sentence, this is far from a proof of a Triune Deity. Like all other verses that Christians use for justifying their beliefs, there's always another explanation - and usually one that is more true to the text. Suffice it to say that in formulating their doctrines, Christians not only ignore the EXPLICIT denials of divinity which were made by Jesus, but they also interpret the ambiguous phrases to fit their pre-conceived notions. Christians sometimes try to downplay the denials of divinity by (more-or-less) saying that "we believe Jesus was a human being". However, they miss the simple fact that claiming to be a human-being is one thing, but DENYING that you're God is quite another. Yes, Jesus spoke of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", but in the language of the Jews who lived prior to and during the time of Jesus, saying "Father", "son" and "Holy Spirit" didn't imply a Triune Deity. If it did, the New Testament writers would have been explicit about it, but they weren't. Need I cite the numerous places in the Old Testament where people, prophets, etc., are called the "son(s) of God" or the passages where "God's spirit" is His Wisdom, an angel

or a spirit subordinate to Him? It may be argued that it cannot be established with certainty whether the "Holy Spirit" in the Old Testament is portrayed as part of God or a spirit external to God that does His will, but this only discredits the clarity of the Old Testament. In spite of all this, the Oneness and transcendence of God in the Old Testament is rather explicit in many places. Need I cite them? One nice verse is 2 Samuel 22:32, where David says: "For who is God ['El] but the Lord ['Ado-nai]? And who is a rock except our God ['Elohaynu]?" Obviously, no division in the Unity of God is intended by this verse, and logically quite the contrary. The context and context of this verse shows that these titles are befitting only of "One" not three. In spite of the sometimes confusing use of the Hebrew word "'El" in the Old Testament (sometimes it is used for God, sometimes for an angel, etc.), the Oneness of God is still fairly EXPLICIT. However, evidence for the Doctrine of the Trinity is at best IMPLICIT, and can ONLY be justified if one has pre-conceived notions. Due to the fact that the Oneness of God in the Old Testament is rather explicit, if the New Testament teaches the Doctrine of the Trinity then that only discredits the New Testament. One way to avoid such confusion is to have a text like the Qur'an where the proper name of God is explicit - "Allah". Additionally, another way which Muslims avoid being influenced by new far-fetched interpretations is to realize that the best interpretation of the Qur'anic and hadith texts is by those who belonged to the early generations of Muslims. This ensures that no one can come along hundreds of years later and claim that they have a "better" interpretation than the one that has always been accepted. Certainly, people have tried to come up with heretical interpretations, but anyone who looks at the clear teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as well as the early Qur'anic commentaries, will see that such a thing is strongly condemned.

RS: In regards to the presence of the "us" and "our" in the Old Testament, this is actually a proof against Christian belief since they were never understood in the way Christians understand them until the time of (St.) Paul or later. In Semitic usage, it is customary for one in authority to speak of himself in the plural. For examples of this, see 2 Samuel 16:20 and Ezra 4:16-19. So who was God talking to in Genesis? That's easy: His heavenly hosts. In other places where He uses "We" or "Us", He is talking to man, Moses, the Children of Israel or whomever the particular statement in question was intended for. Even if, for argument's sake, I accept that God is talking to Himself, that doesn't imply plurality of "aspect". Almighty God, in the Qur'an, uses the Arabic word for "We" when He makes some statements, but no one who knows the Arabic language ever understood it as an argument for plurality. This is what we call the "Royal We", or the "Plural of Majesty" and it is mentioned in almost any book on Arabic grammar. English has much the same thing. When a King or Queen issues a proclamation, they say "We, the King of England...". This is also done by monarchs in Arabic-speaking countries. Who are they talking to when they do this? Their intended audience of course, not themselves.

The examples given above (i.e. 2 Samuel 16:20 and Ezra 4:16-19), also demonstrate this. Additionally, it can also be shown that even though the Hebrew word "Elohim" is plural in form, it can be singular in meaning. See Judges 13:21-22 where ONE angel is seen but it is referred to as "Elohim", i.e. the plural. In another place, Exodus 22:8, "Elohim" is used to refer to a plurality of HUMAN judges. (You may have to crack your Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible to get at some of these!) And how about the woman, upon seeing Samuel, who says to Saul: "I see "Elohim" coming out of the earth". (1 Samuel 28:13). Certainly only a single individual is referred to here, not a plurality, even though the verb following "Elohim" is in the plural! Verse 14 of 1 Samuel 28 clearly shows that one person is referred to and that no plurality is implied. So suffice it to say that plural forms, in both Arabic, Hebrew and English, don't necessarily imply plurality. That "plurality of the Godhead" is implied in the language of the Old Testament (which is admittedly imprecise) is just an invention by Christians in order to fill a theological need. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (known as the "Septuagint" translates "Elohim" as "ho Theos" (i.e. the God). This is a SINGULAR translation which was done at least two centuries prior to the coming of Jesus, peace be upon him, and shows that the implication of plurality in these words is a purely Christian invention. In spite of all this, if you still want to believe that the "Godhead", as Christians often refer to It, is "plural", then that belief is to your own discredit. It seems to me that the Bible is in need of a clear and unambiguous revelation from God so that people can sort all of this out!

PART 3

RS: *I feel that I should re-emphasize the following point: In some of your statements above, you're clearly arguing for PLURALITY IN GOD!!! You use the word "aspects", which is kind of slippery. Why don't you use the word "person" or "hypostasis"? These are the official and agreed upon words. Are you afraid of these words and that they might sound too crude for Muslims? Let's talk about "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not made" . . . But regardless of the language, the simple fact remains that you're trying to argue that God is plural! If you ALSO say that He is One, then you're arguing for mutually exclusive concepts. That's why I refer to it as "double-speak". The human mind isn't made for such concepts. If you say that God is a "mystery" or "incomprehensible", then show me in the words of Jesus in the New Testament where it says that "paradox" and "mystery" are mental vehicles for reaching the truth. This is a Greek, not a Semitic-Hebrew idea. If we believe that God is merciful, then the TRUTH which He reveals should be MANIFEST and the teachings should be EXPLICIT. I remember thinking a few years ago, when I was studying about Christianity and Islam, that it sure*

would be nice to have Jesus around today so that I could go up and ask him two questions: 1) Is it more important to believe that God is "One" or "Tri-une"?; and 2) What do I need to do in order to get into Heaven?. However, once I thought about it a bit more, I realized that I already had answers to these questions! The New Testament shows how Jesus **EXPLICITLY** and **CLEARLY** answered both of these questions - not to mention the *Qur'an*! How could a prophet doing the work of Almighty God do otherwise? If something such as the "Doctrine of the Trinity" or having Jesus as one's "Lord and Personal Savior" is so important, it would be unjust - if not criminal - for it not to be an explicit teaching. It should be kept in mind that Jesus' audience was made up mostly of Jews, so when he mentioned "One God", they certainly understood it in an absolute and non-Trinitarian way. Those of you who don't already know Jesus', peace be upon him, clear answers to these direct questions, please see Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 22:35-40; Matthew 19:16-17; Mark 10:17-19 and Luke 18:18-20. On top of all this, the New Testament says that Jesus, peace be upon him, went around preaching "the gospel". (See Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 11:5; Mark 1:15, 8:35; Luke 4:18, 7:22, 9:6 and 20:1). Based on this fact, Christians should be able to **COMPLETELY** derive their doctrines and "Gospel message" from the words of Jesus as reported in the New Testament. However, everyone who has taken a look at the evidence should be able to conclude that Christians certainly cannot do this - they have to appeal to the epistles of Paul and to an innovated Trinitarian vocabulary. So what was this "gospel" that Jesus was preaching? Was it **CLEARLY** the Divine Incarnation, the Atonement and the Trinity? I certainly feel that the longest and most eloquent sermon in the New Testament (Matthew 5-7), commonly known as "The Sermon on the Mount", lends support to the Pure Monotheism of Islam, not to Trinitarian Christian belief.

RS: It should also be mentioned that it's not just the incoherence of Christianity that leads one to these conclusions, because on top of all of this we have a new, **CLEAR** and unambiguous revelation - the *Qur'an* - that contradicts the Christian claims. Whether one agrees that the *Qur'an* is Almighty God's final revelation to mankind or not, the guidance in it is **CLEAR**. That the *Qur'an*'s central message is the Unity of God is indisputable. The message of the Bible isn't so clear. If God is merciful and really wants all men to be saved by believing in the Christian doctrines and beliefs, why didn't Jesus make the message clear? Why is most of the New Testament written by Paul, who still didn't make things clear? Almighty God, as He describes Himself in the *Qur'an*, is Merciful and Compassionate towards His Creation, and one way which He manifests this is by making His revelations clear and comprehensible - even to the limited human mind.

>It also invalidates your claim that the Jews rejected "Paul's" teachings because of this element, as their own scriptures say the same.

RS: *You're jumping to conclusions here! The Jews rejected the message of Trinitarian Christianity because of HOW the words in the Old Testament were interpreted. Their "scriptures say the same" only in the sense that they contain the same words, but it is the Christians who give them the new and unfounded interpretation. Certainly it is rather ridiculous to say that the Jews rejected Paul's claim because of words that were already present in the Old Testament! I produced evidence above that it is the Christian interpretation of the words, not the words themselves, that cause the difficulties - so suffice it to say my claim is far from invalidated in this regard. Heresies generally come about by re-interpreting and adding to Scriptures (either real or alleged), not by changing the existing one.*

>The reason the Jews rejected Jesus was not because they failed to recognize that the one true God has diversity within him, it was B) because they objected to a mere man equating himself with God (at least that's how they understood it - I'll address this a little later); and B) because they were wrongly expecting a political Messiah who would free them from the Roman rule, not a spiritual Messiah who would fulfill the Law and the Prophets. They therefore rejected Jesus, not the idea of the Trinity, and in doing so they were wrong, even according to the Qu'ran, which acknowledges that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

RS: *You seem to be basing this on what the New Testament says about the Jews and/or what Protestants say are the reasons that the Jews rejected Jesus. However, what I based my statement on is what JEWS THEMSELVES, both past and present, say. Read some of their books and see what they have to say! Don't find out about them based on what other people say about them. Remember the Katz quote? Now as far as them denying "diversity", it should be pointed out that the Jews, as well as Muslims, confirm a "diversity" of attributes for God, i.e. we agree that He has more than one attribute. Muslims, as I have mentioned, confirm for Him all of the attributes which He has confirmed for Himself. However, this is a far cry from the type of "diversity" that is stated in Christian doctrines (not personal opinions) about the Trinity - which make the "Three" as absolute as the "One". In Islam, God has infinite - or at least many known and unknown - attributes, so we know better than to try to "define" Him by any NUMBER except by the ONE number that He has attributed to Himself - i.e. "ONE". Now concerning the Jews' concept of the Messiah, they certainly rejected Jesus for the reasons that you speak of, but there are other aspects as well. On the one hand, he may not have fulfilled their political wishes, but on the other hand, they never expected the Messiah to be "God incarnate" as Christians later claimed. In my response to Smith, I was speaking of why Jews reject Trinitarian Christianity in general, not why they specifically don't believe Jesus*

was the Messiah (which is only one aspect of it). Muslims believe that Jesus was the Messiah based on the authority of the Qur'an. There are various opinions on whether he was the one-and-only Messiah or just one among several. The word "Messiah" in the Old Testament is used more-or-less as a title, and this title is given to several people. Also, of the prophecies (either real or alleged) in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, Jesus certainly did not fulfill ALL of them. Muslims believe that Jesus, peace be upon him, will fulfill his role as the political Messiah when he comes again. But this is all really beside the point here. Your statement above simply shows that you need to read up on what the Jews have to say, not just what others say about them. Most Jews, by the way, also feel that the writers of the four Gospels severely misrepresented and misunderstood the Pharisaic Judaism of 1st Century Palestine.

>The nature of God is obviously a very hard, even impossible, thing to grasp. Indeed, I would be very surprised if God COULD be properly understood by my limited mind. The Trinity is therefore a mystery, like all aspects of God, as it represents a reality which lies beyond any earthly experience and is therefore

RS: *All aspects of God are not a "mystery". He has described Himself, and His description and attributes are TRUE. What's the point in God revealing Himself if everything about Him is still going to be a mystery? Isn't that one of the main points of Divine Revelation: to reveal to mankind matters of the unseen? Certainly God is capable of revealing Himself to the human mind in the way that He WANTS to be understood! If not, how could we be blamed for having an incorrect concept of Him? Either way that you look at it, using our finite human mind to come up with ideas or "definitions" about God is the worst, and most misguided of all possible choices. Why would God both condemn "idol worship" and teach "human minds" a concept of Him if every mental concept of Him, even if based on Divine Revelation, was also idol worship? That would be rather contradictory! One practice that can certainly be classified as "idol worship" is coming up with a concept or "definition" of God based human reason - whether wholly or in part on . Honestly, who is guilty of that - Muslims or Christians?*

>by definition something which cannot be defined simply (try to describe a colour to a blind man!). This is why Christians have always struggled to express it clearly, although I think "confused mental acrobatics" to be a harsh assessment.

>

RS: *However, if one believes that Almighty God is All-Capable, as you claim, then He certainly should be able to describe Himself in a way*

befitting the limited human mind. Are you implying that God is incapable of that? Is describing Himself in a proper way DIFFICULT for Him? As far as "confused mental acrobatics" . . . I still find it to be a rather fitting description.

>However, the fact that it is hard to understand does not make it WRONG, nor do Muslims refuse to accept anything which is not absolutely and clearly explicable. For instance, Muslims and Christians agree that God created the world and made man. However, I don't suppose any of us would claim to fully understand or clearly explain WHY he should wish to do so. We may grasp parts of it, but never the whole, because we are not God.

>

RS: *First of all, saying things about Almighty God which He hasn't said about Himself, or trying to "define" Him based on human reason, is most certainly (and absolutely) WRONG. Secondly, we must distinguish between something that is "mysterious" and something that is incoherent and contradictory. There is a big difference between what the mind is able to prove false and knows to be impossible or absurd, and that which the mind is unable to conceive of. The mind can't conceive some things because it knows nothing about them and has no information either confirming or denying them. Divine revelation fulfills and satisfies the second category, not the first. If religious messages could be argued on the basis of "unexplained mystery" or a "blind leap of faith", all talk would become idle. People could say anything and defend it by saying "It's a mystery". Protestants don't accept this from Catholics, and vice-versa, so why should Muslims accept "The Mystery Clause" from Christians - or any other heretics? Just the other day I happened to read the following letter in the 15 January 1996 issue of TIME magazine (International version): "The Bible cannot be measured by today's scientific yardstick. Those apologists who seek to prove the accuracy of Scripture through reason are holders of pragmatism, not faith. The truth encompassed in the Bible is not objectively valid; it is absurd and irrational and cannot be harmonized with reason. The believer commits himself to things that are unintelligible, and with confidence plunges into the absurd. The "facts" of science can never validate or invalidate what the person of faith knows to be true". Even though many Christians may disagree with all or some of this statement, there have been a lot of prominent Christian theologians throughout history, including Martin Luther and Karl Barth, which have kind of tended towards this irrational approach. The problem with this is that those believers who "know" things to be true don't always agree on the same beliefs, so trying to decide whether a religious doctrine is true based on someone else's subjective experiences is an exercise in futility (and misguidance). I'm not the first person to call Christianity an unreasonable religion. The Christian view is contradictory, because when it comes to religion,*

they allow for - and even praise - absurdity and irrationality. If one allows for this in all important religious matters, then why not elsewhere? How does one decide where reliance on absurdity and paradox are evidence of truth and where they are evidence for falsehood?

RS: *By the way, you made another incorrect assumption when you assumed that Muslims don't know WHY God "created the world and made man". It may surprise you to know that we Muslims DO know WHY Almighty God created the world and man. How do we know this? Because He clearly and explicitly told us WHY: **"I created the jinn and humankind only that they might WORSHIP ME"** - Qur'an 51:56.*

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>BTW, one thing should be clarified: Mary has NO role in Trinity, nor does any Bible-believing Christian think that she does. This is a Roman Catholic doctrine, and while Roman Catholicism may be grouped under the umbrella of Christianity by non-Christians, its many unbiblical doctrines render it in effect a separate religion. The Trinity as revealed in the Bible consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

RS: *I am so very happy that you brought up this point because it's a classic case of you assuming that I have assumed something, when I haven't assumed at all! Let's take a look at the facts . . . many missionaries and Orientalists have claimed for years that the Qur'an makes a "mistake" by including Mary in the Trinity. However, guess what? The Qur'an makes no such statement. The Qur'an mentions the Trinity in two places 4:171 and 5:76 - NEITHER of which states that Mary is part of the Trinity. The Qur'an condemns the "worship" of Mary, but NO WHERE does it say she's a member of the Trinity. I address this issue head-on in a forthcoming section of my response to the Joseph Smith "Tawhid" paper. Many Roman Catholics today DO "worship" Mary, so the Qur'anic criticism is certainly justified. Even though Roman Catholics deny that they "worship" Mary, it does amount to a "de facto" worship, even though it may not be "de jure". Interestingly enough, in my forthcoming response to Smith I support my claims with statements from Protestant theologians regarding their view of the role of Mary, and the "worship" of her, in Roman Catholicism. In light of your statement above, it seems as though you're the one who needs to go brush up on Christianity, because you say "This is a Roman Catholic doctrine", but it IS NOT. Roman Catholics DO NOT consider Mary to be part of the Trinity. They call her "Mother of God" and they pray to her, but they don't consider her to be part of the Trinity. Whose books have you been reading? Roman Catholics believe that the Trinity is made up of the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" just like most other Christians. Additionally, it might surprise you to know that Evangelical Protestant Christians are the*

real "heretics" in this regard, not the Roman Catholics (or Orthodox for that matter). The RCs and Orthodox still outnumber Protestants by quite a bit, by the way, and they both have deeper historical roots. They've been involved in "Mariolatry" for a lot longer than it's been since Martin Luther began his movement. I suggest that you look into Roman Catholic and Orthodox responses to Evangelical Protestant claims. You might find them interesting. I sure do! Have you read such material before? Don't just read what the Protestants say about them (need I quote Katz again!), but let them give their own view. Remember when I mentioned "misapprehensions" above? Here it seems as though we've had a misapprehension of something that wasn't a misapprehension at all

PART 4

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>5) The Trinity continued

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>Firstly, as our limited earthly experience does not permit us to fully understand God, it is impossible for us to give a perfectly adequate explanation of the Trinity.

RS: *That's why we have to stick to what God has revealed, because He is certainly capable of describing Himself. It is certainly impossible for you, but it is easy enough for Him! In the Qur'an, and to a lesser degree in the Bible, Almighty God has given a very CLEAR and a MORE than ADEQUATE EXPLANATION of His ONENESS. This shouldn't be so hard to understand - it is very clear. If Almighty God is capable of anything, as you claim, couldn't He also explain the Trinity in an adequate way? It seems as though you have some double-standards when it comes to your doctrines! This point demonstrates all the more clearly out fruitless, pointless and misguided it is to leave something as important as a "description" or "definition" of God in the hands of human beings. Coming up with "definitions", or any other free-thinking ideas about God, based on human reason, is one of the things that the Commandment condemning "graven images" condemns. Mental images can be just as dangerous as molten ones! My only suggestion is that you flee from your current beliefs onto the solid ground of clear guidance. If Almighty God chooses to guide you, none can misguide you, and if He chooses to bestow His grace on you, who can withhold it?*

> I have heard many good explanations (at least, they were of interest to me). However, Genesis 2, as quoted above, clearly states that God made man in his own likeness and image (not physical, but we are a representation or reflection, on a much lesser scale, of the nature of God, except that our nature has been distorted by sin, whereas God is

and always has been completely pure, holy and good). I therefore find most help in looking at my own nature (NOT in any way elevating myself to be comparable with God, but merely trying to see some trace of His nature in His handiwork).

RS: *I've touched on the "image" issue above, and I'll touch on it a little more below, so for brevity's sake I refer the reader to those sections.*

>I am one person, yet there is diversity in me, and I am made essentially of three different aspects: my body, my spirit and my soul (or, if you like, mind). These are all sufficiently diverse as to be separately identifiable/definable. Yet, they cannot be divided or separated (at least without killing me!). Again, I am NOT equating myself with God. Rather, just as you might expect to see indicators of an artist's nature in his works, some small understanding of God may be gleaned by examining his creation, especially the crowning work of his creation, namely mankind.

RS: *Your choice of three aspects is purely arbitrary and based on a pre-conceived notion. You could just as well choose two aspects, four aspects or twelve aspects. Also, all of this is completely un-Scriptural (and reeking of Greek thought), which is another good reason to avoid such free-thinking hypothesis - especially when they have to do with God. Additionally, your illustration simply can't be supported from the Bible, since according to the New Testament, Jesus prayed to God and called Him "My God and your God" (John 20:17) - which seems to logically exclude him from being a part or "identifiable aspect" of Almighty God. That is, of course, if you want to remain a Monotheist. If Jesus had a "God" - the same God as his followers, but he is also "God", how many Gods is that? At least two it would seem. Looking at your illustration in the light of the above mentioned statements from the New Testament, shows it to be at best contradictory and at worst completely pointless.*

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>Secondly, if God is omnipotent, why does anyone see a difficulty in him "putting on" human nature if he so wishes?

RS: *First of all, no human being has any business deciding what God "can" and "cannot" do. Why do you insist on looking at this from the standpoint of capability? Capability isn't the question. We have to base our ideas about God on what He has revealed about Himself, and not on some hypothetical guesswork. The scholars of the "Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah" (i.e. "Orthodox" Sunnis) have always condemned free-thinking theology, since once people start deciding*

*what God can and cannot do based on their (all too human) reason, the door is open for almost anything. Can God be other than He is? Could He make Himself not exist? Could He make Himself TRULY forget something, but then make Himself remember it again? Is He a prisoner of His attributes? Can He be other than He is? It should be kept in mind that "freedom" doesn't always mean freedom to do certain things, but it can also mean being above doing certain things. Also, the fact that Almighty God chooses not to contradict Himself is not a deficiency. Even though further along in this paper you say: "... the problem essentially is not that God could not come as a man . . . ", many Christians quite often present the "problem" of capability as the essential issue. Such rhetoric may make some people wiggle, but approaching things this way is essentially a misguided (and unscriptural) exercise. Personally, this brings to mind a dilemma thought up by (St.) Augustine, which some of us may remember from parochial school. In trying to "explain" the Trinity and Incarnation, (St.) Augustine said: "Did God not want to have a Son who should be equal to Himself, or was He unable to have such a Son? If He did not want to, He is jealous; if He could not, He is incapable." Unfortunately, this false dilemma is not only **not** well thought out, but it is arbitrary and un-Scriptural as well. For starters, both the Old Testament and the Qur'an clearly tell us that God certainly IS JEALOUS, so how could (St.) Augustine believe otherwise? (See Exodus 34:14 (. . . the Lord, whose name is Jealous, . . .), 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9, 6:5 and 29:20.). It seems that (St.) Augustine was giving more weight to his Greek-style logic and pre-conceived notions than to what the scriptures which he allegedly followed CLEARLY said! Suffice it to say that appealing to the Old Testament nips (St.) Augustine's little false-dilemma in the bud - before one even has to move on to the "capability" question. However, since we're already on the subject, we should analyze the oft-quoted verse: "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27 and Luke 8:27). This verse is often used by Christians to justify the "Incarnation", but if one takes a look at the context of this verse, it does not mean what they use it to mean. Christians try to use this verse to mean that God can do ANYTHING - even, assumably, the unbecoming things which I mentioned above. This verse, however, simply means that human being are powerless without God's help, i.e. we can overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles if we rely on God and have His support. Another proof that "all things" doesn't necessarily mean "all things" in an absolute sense is Mark 9:23. This verse says: "... all things are possible to him who believes." Certainly, if "all things" means absolutely "all things", then a believer should be able to not only raise people from the dead and create a independent universe, but also do anything else without limit. May God save us from such foolishness! So suffice it to say that the phrase "With God all things are possible", if taken in context, does not lend any support to Christian efforts. We should also mention that, from the Islamic perspective, the attribute of "Jealousy" that God ascribes to Himself is an attribute of perfection like all of His attributes. This is because God's attributes are not like the attributes of creatures, but*

are befitting of His Majesty. They should never be thought of as deficiencies, as Christians tend to do when they read about God's Wrath, Anger or Jealousy. All of the attributes that God has authentically ascribed to Himself are befitting of Him and His Majesty. To deny that God is "Jealous", basically amounts to a denial of the way He has described Himself, as well as an endorsement of idolatry and polytheism - practices which He condemns due to His Jealousy. So where does this attribute, which is CLEARLY emphasized in something so fundamental as the Ten Commandments, fit into Christian theology? They may have tried to squeeze it in somewhere, but it certainly doesn't get the EMPHASIS that God Himself put on it!

RS: *Another reason that God-Fearing Pure Monotheists see a "difficulty" in God "putting on" human nature is the simple fact that God Himself denied such a thing long before Trinitarian Christians tried to say otherwise. Even though Almighty God never stated it in terms of capability, He has clearly taught that nothing in His creation can represent Him, that He is transcendent above Creation as well as UN-CHANGING. This can be proven from both the Old Testament and the Qur'an. And speaking of God's attribute of being un-Changing . . . this Divine Attribute usually leads Christians into coming up with the type of "double-speak" that I mentioned previously. Even if Christians claim that the "Sonship" was inherent in the "Godhead" for Eternity (audhu bi-Lah!), there is still the fact that they ALSO claim (as you have) that God divested Himself of some of His power and attributes (even if willfully), in order to enter Time and Space as a man. Regardless of the methods which you may employ in order to portray this in a way becoming to Almighty God, it logically eliminates UN-CHANGING as one of God's attributes. Even if Christians still want to claim that it's all a "mystery" and a "paradox", their claim to believing that Almighty God is un-Changing --- just like their belief in His transcendence --- is logically baseless. Moving back to our introductory point, suffice it to say that in regards to becoming "incarnate" in His Creation, Almighty God has described Himself otherwise PREVIOUS to people coming up with the idea that he needs (or wants) to become a man. If He planned on becoming a man, why would He include the following verse in the Bible: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent . . . " (Numbers 23:019)? That seems like a pretty clear statement to me, and coupled with other EXPLICIT statements in the Bible, it puts Christians in quite a dilemma. "Either God is NOT a man or He is a liar" - as I will discuss more below. His description of Himself was done with man's best interest in mind, and it doesn't detract from God in the least - quite the contrary. Almighty God's "wishes", will or omnipotence have nothing to do with it. However, the feeling that one comes away with when reading Christian explanations or justifications of their doctrines is that they are a mixture of human-reason and alleged "Divine Revelation". Additionally, since none of what they claim is clearly or explicitly taught in the Bible, one also gets the feeling that the God which they create with their man-made ideas is*

really an "author of confusion". This stands in glaring contrast to the Biblical statement that "God is not the author of confusion . . ." (I Corinthians 14:33). You can't have your cake and eat it too!

RS: *Since I've already addressed the "capability" issue, I want to mention a few other things here. For starters, a "diversity of attributes" is one thing, but having one attribute "pray" to another attribute is quite another. I touched on this a little bit in the previous paragraph. Additionally, many Christians try to justify Jesus' alleged divinity by saying that Jesus is the "Word" - which they also believe to be an attribute of God. Keeping this in mind, what sense does it make for Jesus to pray WORDS to God (or "the Father")? Additionally, Almighty God's attributes are NOT the SAME as HIM. No Muslim would ever pray to God's word, i.e. "Oh Qur'an! Guide me and forgive me!", but only to God Himself. However, Christians pray to Jesus! Additionally, one can believe that God is the Living, Loving, Revealing, All-Knowing and All-Merciful without "defining" Him as three or any other number. One can also believe that God is Just without Jesus having to "demonstrate" His Justice on the Cross - which is how quite a number of Christian theologians explain the necessity of the alleged crucifixion. Another strange thing about the Trinity is that some Christians claim textual authority for it, while others claim that it is based on the authority of reason. The group that claims it is a revealed doctrine has dwindled in the past few centuries. Most Christians, such as yourself, try to come up with rational explanations for what they think the Bible says - all the while claiming it's a matter beyond reason. Heretics among Muslims and Christians also claim that their doctrines are "beyond reason". Christians don't accept this from each other, so why should Muslims accept it from them? For example, when Roman Catholics explain their views on the Holy Eucharist, Protestants basically reject it more on the basis of being unreasonable than anti-Scriptural.*

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> The only obstacle to this idea is a lack of understanding of the magnitude of God's love, and of the fact that he is so great, and so secure in his greatness, that he is also perfectly humble! Humility is not the same as "modesty", deprecating one's genuinely good qualities for the sake of appearance. Rather, it is to do with an honest (not excessive) appreciation of one's gifts and limits, and with being so secure in these that one is not afraid to lay down one's status and privileges! As God has no limits, expect what he imposes on himself, he can be humble in spite of his greatness, and his love for us is so great that if limiting himself (or at least one aspect of his nature, the Son) to human form is what is required to save us, that is what he will do, and in fact did.

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RS: *All of these "free-thinking" attempts to make the Christian view show God in a good light were not clearly taught by Jesus. When asked directly: "What shall I do to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?", etc., he never stated such a thing. No where does the Bible say that "paradox", "pathos" and "mystery" are vehicles for reaching the Truth. These are Greek, not Semitic ideas. If God was so humble, why didn't He limit His "Father" aspect? Why didn't "the Father" become man, instead of just the "Son"? Why not the "Holy Spirit" too? May God save us all from becoming free-thinking blasphemers! The "Son" by definition, is subordinate, so it's no wonder that the "Son" is limited. If you say the "Son" is not limited or dependent, then your language is inappropriate - you need to choose a different word. The word "Son" means something that depends on something else, but God depends on no one. Since God is a Merciful Lord, He could most certainly make the truth clear. Isn't he capable of that? We should be able to agree that God can "save" whomever believes about Him what He wants them to believe about Him, i.e. follows the correct religious teachings/beliefs that He has revealed. That being the case, the most merciful and loving thing that He could do is to make it CLEAR. If Almighty God did decide to do some humble, merciful or loving act, but didn't make it clear that belief in this act was more important than previous beliefs that were ALREADY CLEARLY EMPHASIZED, this would detract heavily from - albeit destroy - the purpose of the love and mercy that were part of the original act.*